

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. – 14. **(Canceled)**

15. **(Currently Amended)** A method of communicating with a communication module being removably connected to a node in a communications network, the module being adapted to perform a primary function and a secondary function, the method comprising:

receiving an access request signal in the module from a portable software carrier unit;

receiving an authorization signal from an authorization unit, the authorization signal identifying the module and instructing the module to grant access to the portable software carrier unit; [[and]]

exchanging data between the module and the portable software carrier unit via a bi-directional optical interface of the module while the module performs the primary function over the network via a network interface of the module, the data including information pertaining to accomplishment of the primary function and being exchanged independently of the primary function;

receiving at least one piece of information pertaining to the accomplishment of the primary function via the bi-directional optical interface;

storing temporarily the at least one piece of information in a second digital storage unit in the communication module;

resetting the communication module; and

altering the contents of the first digital storage on basis of the at least one piece of information.

wherein the primary function includes receiving incoming network traffic via the network interface and performing switching and/or routing operations on the received network traffic.

16. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 15, wherein the authorization signal includes an address field which designates a specific module position within the node.

17. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 15, wherein the authorization signal includes a unique identifier of the module.

18. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 15 wherein the access request signal comprises a pass phrase that is received via the bi-directional optical interface.

19. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 18, wherein the pass phrase includes a static segment.

20. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 18 wherein the pass phrase includes a dynamic segment, the method comprising calculating the dynamic segment in the portable software carrier unit and a central resource respectively.

21. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 18 wherein the pass phrase includes a cyclic redundancy checksum, the cyclic redundancy checksum being based on data which is to update the contents of a first digital storage in the module.

22. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 15 further comprising updating of the contents of a first digital storage unit in the module via the bi-directional optical interface.

23. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 22, further comprising:

receiving at least one control command via the bi-directional optical interface;

and

altering at least one parameter in the first digital storage unit pertaining to the accomplishment of the primary function on basis of the at least one control command.

24. **(Canceled)**

25. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 15 further comprising reading out data from a first digital storage unit in the module via the bi-directional optical interface.

26. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 25, further comprising:

receiving a request for status information via the bi-directional optical interface;

and

transmitting a status report on basis of the request, the status report including data pertaining to at least one parameter of the primary function.

27. **(Previously Presented)** A method according to claim 22, wherein the primary function is a first primary function and wherein updating of the contents of the first digital storage unit via the bi-directional optical interface changes the first primary function to a second primary function.

28. – 29. **(Canceled)**